



## AAC Publications

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### **Fall on Rock — Free Soloing**

Yosemite National Park, Manure Pile Buttress

**On April 11, Josh Ourada (31) fell while free soloing Nutcracker (5 pitches, 5.8) on the Manure Pile Buttress. Ourada has been climbing for over ten years and was no stranger to free soloing. He had climbed Nutcracker before, both with and without a rope.**

Ourada was halfway up pitch four, climbing over a bulge with poor feet, when his foot, hand, or both slipped. He fell 150 to 200 feet to a ledge. From his recollection, his back was to the wall during the fall. He was using his feet, hands, and body to try and slow the descent. Ourada landed, seated on a boulder, at the belay ledge for the start of pitch three. A climber on the belay ledge had to jump out of the way.

Climbers in the area heard screams followed by the thud of Ourada landing in the ledge. 911 was called. The climber who had dodged Ourada stayed with him for several hours until a helicopter rescue was completed. Ourada's injuries included a shattered right heel, fractured pelvis, lacerated left foot, several broken ribs, collapsed lung, and a severely injured L1 vertebra (burst fracture). He also had significant road rash.

### **ANALYSIS**

Free soloing is inherently dangerous, with little room for error, even for the most talented and experienced soloists. Ourada had retreated on free solo climbs before if he felt any deficits. This time, in hindsight, Ourada thinks he might not have been in the right headspace.

It's assumed that a free solo climber is taking their life into their own hands. However, consideration must be given to other climbers who might be affected and to the safety of the rescuers. Neither bystanders nor SAR members have signed on to the soloist's risky interpretation of the game. Ourada is remorseful for putting other climbers and rescue personnel in harm's way. (Sources: Josh Ourada, Climbing Magazine, and the Editors.)

## Images



The approximate location of the fall on Manure Pile Buttress is marked with a red X, and a rescuer can be seen with the patient by the red arrow. The yellow ledge is the 3rd class ledge used to approach the base of the second pitch.



Manure Pile Buttress. A rescuer being lowered to the ground with the patient in a litter.

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